

Adm. I.: Well, I was continuously jockeyed between the two - Fubini and Kurtz. Kurtz had no use for Fubini and Fubini had nothing but sneering remarks to make about the dunderhead Admiral, all of which made my life miserable.

The Cuban missile crisis came along. During the course of it, Jerry Weisner, who was the scientific adviser to the president - Kennedy - had me, together with Sampson, over in his offices and we were in turn, taken into a session with the President, the Vice-President, the Attorney General, McNamara, Maxwell Taylor, the Joint Chiefs. I was going to say it was the National Security Council, I am not sure about that. It was an eye-opener to me to sit and listen to and watch the back-and-forth across the table - President Kennedy, Mr. Lyndon Johnson, the vice-president, and the gadfly, Bobby Kennedy, in a great frazzle over the turning back of the missile ships going into Cuba. I remember George Anderson was there. The destroyers had been set to turn the ships back that were coming in to Cuban waters with missiles aboard, and it was touch and go as to whether they were going to be able to do it. I remember vividly, Anderson coming back into the room, saying to Maxwell Taylor that he had a message which was most important for the president; they stopped their back and forth bickering and Anderson read the message saying that the missile ships -

(Rear Admiral William D. Irvin, USN, interviewed by John T. Mason Jr. on 12 October 1978)

these were Russian freighters - had been turned around and were steaming back toward Russia away from Cuba. Well, the whole set-up around the table were just heaving sighs of relief that we hadn't come to a showdown, a real fight. The president quickly pulled the thing back together and he insisted there be action right away - that moment, but the fact that the president had attempted to communicate with all the Organization of American States, throughout the Southern Hemisphere, they found it almost impossible to do so. Communications to most of them were simply commercial communication facilities. Each one of them had a CIA echelon, CIA transmitters and receivers but they were only brought to bear after some emergency action had taken place in a particular country, at which time the CIA operator would open up on his transmitter and receiver and establish a link with Washington. There was no going controlling communications system anywhere in these states. Some of them, the only way you could reach them, was to send a Western Union message from Washington to New York and New York in turn, would turn it over to a commercial company that would put in on a cable or something of the sort, to a place in South America where it again would be subject to the functioning of the commercial communications outfit in that country to get it to the foreign government concerned. In consequence of this, the president was truly beating

the table now about the fact that there had to be sure-fire method which would make it possible for him to exercise immediate contact with every one of the ambassadors in these southern states. And it had to be under the control of the U.S.

McNamara was saying, it could be done, they could do it with military money and with military facilities and they didn't have to go to Congress to ask for it, that it could be done right away - he could exercise it through the Department of Defense resources and facilities. Bobby, sitting on the other side of the table - as I say, he was a gadfly, he was needling the hell out of the President to do it, do it, do it. Lyndon Johnson, on the other hand, was expressing all kinds of careful - you can't do this, you've got to cut in the Congress, and you've got to do this, that, and the other thing. McNamara arguing, but only after needling by Bobby - we can do it. Rusk was saying we've got to move carefully in this area, we can't just overtly go on and do this, that, and the other thing. So it was quite an exercise to see. I recall vividly Jerome (Jerry) Weisner turning to me saying, this is all balderdash, as soon as this is over with you and Sampson and I will get together and see just what it is that can be done and we won't be under the influence of that gadfly Bobby.

There wasn't any question in my mind that McNamara